



Zardozi Markets for Afghan Artisans



Halima’s restaurant is open to welcome her customers.

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Better food, better mood with Halima’s Restaurant

Somewhere in the outskirts of Herat city, Halima’s restaurant offers affordability and peace of mind for families and friends who enjoy dining together. The thought of opening a restaurant, particularly for women, came to Halima when she and her female friends were harassed by men in a restaurant in her neighborhood. Halima realized that her hometown was missing a comfortable and safe place for people to gather, especially for women. She had previously heard of Zardozi and went to them with her ideas and business plan. Zardozi agreed with her vision and approved a loan for 100,000 AFN, enabling Halima to pursue her dream.

Halima hails from Iran but moved to Afghanistan, looking for opportunities and a hope for creating a better life for herself and her family. She had heard of Zardozi through neighbors, and with her family’s support, she started her first business as a tailor. She later expanded into creating a production workshop where she trains twenty women under her own clothing brand name. Her successes were not only monetary, but rewarding, knowing that she had helped other women in a similar circumstance to hers. Zardozi recognizes her hard work and accomplishments, creating a partnership that has benefitted both parties. This partnership has lasted four years.

As Halima moves forward, she tells us that the restaurant, Dehkada-e Taam, is the biggest step in her life, being introduced to new management and leadership, different thoughts and views. She says, “Although, it is a challenging job, I am very happy becoming Zardozi’s first client, taking such a major step and innovation. Working with Zardozi has taught me to not fear what will come next, but to take risks and move on.”

Halima’s restaurant is the first place where male and female staff members work together. Duties include cooking, accounting, and wait staff positions. Halima says, “It gets hard when the customers number increase on certain days, so several family members come to help me in the restaurant, making sure to serve everyone on time. I am most grateful.”

At the end, Halima thanked Zardozi for enhancing her business and leadership skills as well as trusting her abilities to advance and move forward in her life. She expressed her happiness even more when she proudly said, “I am paying for my university to study Business Administration- a field that will help me become one of Afghanistan’s top businesswomen.”

The findings

Based on Zardozi's data collection and surveys, they have found two key ingredients needed for a successful startup: family support and money. In a number of interviews with Zardozi's clients, women state that the source of issues and contention in the household is a direct result from poverty. Zardozi has made significant efforts educating and encouraging the women's family members, focusing on the men in their family. It is important for Afghan men to understand how their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters can improve the family lifestyle. Zardozi does this through different educational programs, by offering loans based on a client's business plan and recognition through a ceremony praising the woman's success. Implementing these tactics brings the community together as well as the family unit, combining strengths in order to help the client fully succeed. Zardozi offers loans in different amounts based on client's need and business plan, with a monthly payment plan in effect.

Kabul Exhibition



Zardozi clients passionately sell their products as the crowd keeps coming in

Zardozi held its most successful exhibition in Shahrak-e-Aria Kabul, in collaboration with its partner, Women for Women International. The exhibition took place in a secure and safe environment where clients sold and promoted their products. It was incredible to see clients' brothers and husbands, standing beside their women and helping them to sell their goods and interact with customers. BiBi Shirin came from Kapisa to showcase her products. Her husband would not allow her to travel alone to Kabul, so she convinced him to travel with her. "When my husband saw the increasing number of visitors buying my materials as well as high profit margins in one day, he was ashamed for trying to prevent me from coming. Now he encourages me to continue my work." Zardozi aims to arrange more of these exhibitions, not only so these women can expand their businesses and promote their products, but more importantly to use such opportunities as means of changing strict and conservative mentalities of their male family members.

Shakila's Beauty Salon Dream Came True



Shakila does her client's make-up based on the clients requested video tutorial

As a child, Shakila, age 20, always wanted her own hair and makeup salon, dreaming to be her own boss. Shakila's dreams were shattered by her father and the conservative norms of society, going against Islamic culture. Her father left the country in search of employment. She saw this as an opportunity to secretly learn the tricks of the beauty trade. She snuck into beauty parlors, eager to learn whatever she could. Unfortunately, her father found out and she was banned from trying to pursue her dreams. It wasn't until her father's death that she was able to reach out to Zardozi for assistance. With assistance from the foundation she took essential courses on beauty skills and familiarized herself with using a computer in order to teach herself by watching tutorials. Her self motivation impressed Zardozi and the organization approved her for a loan in order for her to have an in home beauty salon.

Shakila's problems did not end with her father's death. With her father gone, her brother now stepped in with his views. Afraid that he would forbid her from moving forward, she turned to Zardozi for help. Knowing that in the past, education was key to gaining family support, the foundation invited her brother to a ceremony celebrating successful women. Shakila said, "I was surprised when my brother's attitude shifted completely after watching other women's success. He even told me to teach his wife some of the skills so that she can also work in the beauty parlor."

Zardozi is known for establishing proper training and financial assistance to their clients, but they also educate women on how to run their business in a competitive environment. Shakila mentioned her concerns regarding several other beauty parlors around her neighborhood. Although the competition may be tough, Shakila's attitude resonates strongly. "I love competition. If you don't have any competition, you won't have any challenges, because challenges helps you change and grow."

She credits her confidence to Zardozi's professional trainers. "People appreciate my work and my work ethic. With Zardozi's help, I have earned respect in my community. Women trust me with their appearance, even willing to pay a little more for a job well done.

Shakila's eyes glittered with pride when she said that she feels empowered when her brother asks her for money. She also said she does not rely for money from her brother; instead she buys what she desires on her own.

The glee was written all over her face because her dream had come true with Zardozi.



Halima not only manage her restaurant business well but works part time at her production workshop with her trainees.

About Zardozi

ZARDOZI ZARDOZI is a local non-government and non-profit organization aiming to provide economic and social services to around 6,000 Afghan women in four provinces such as Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, JalalAbad and Kapisa with its main office in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Zardozi's objective is to support and empower Afghan women living in the urban and rural areas through its business skills development programs to engage them in the market economy. To achieve this goal, Zardozi has established Nisfe Jahan as an independent membership-based civil society organization which also runs local Community Business Center where women gather to receive business startup loans; and technical, advisory, business and marketing skills trainings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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